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PL 86-36/50 USC 3605

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TRSID: [redacted] DTR: 990414

QCSID:

INAME: Pryde, Jim

IPLACE: Residence

VIEWER: Williams, J./Dickerson, Y. A.

**Williams**

The date is 15 December, 1998. We are interviewing Mr. Jim Pryde. With me is Yolande Dickerson. I am Jeanette Williams. We are in the home of Mr. Pryde [redacted] and this is interview number 26. Mr. Pryde, thank you for having us. What we'd like to do is start off with a little bit about your background, how did you come to be at the Agency, when did you come to the Agency, and please, just talk freely. [EDITOR'S NOTE: this is actually OH-1998-26.]

**Pryde**

OK.

**Williams**

I'm going to pull this up so I...so you can have it.

**Pryde**

OK. Do you want to check to make sure you're on then?

**Williams**

I'm fine.

**Pryde**

OK.

**Williams**

OK.

**Pryde**

(TR Note: Speaker extremely overdriven) I came to the Agency from a job I had while I was going to college at St. Elizabeth's Hospital. I arrived at the Agency in 1950. I worked for "213" which at that time was the (XG/Overdriven), with a thing called (1G).

**Williams**

Right.

**Pryde**

Since it was in 1950, they say that they didn't understand how laws would allow (1G), Maryland would allow (1-2G) discrimination, so one of the things that was interesting was if you rode the bus to work, you had to go sit on the back of the bus in Washington D.C. to ride out to...

**Williams**

Arlington.

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**Pryde**

Arlington Hall Station.

**Williams**

Right.

**Pryde**

There were simply no jobs for quote "Colored Folk", I've retired... I usually give a little speech to uh, the history week and I told everybody, I've been "Colored, Black, African American, Afro-American", and I haven't changed colors yet. (TR Note: Laughter). I spent about a year in "213" and they came and ask me if knew morse code, which I did; something I learned during World War II as a flyer in "477th Bomb Group". So I was sent to a single room myself and I would get about ten tapes a day to read through and transcribe. I guess they would tell you what the subject was, cause I don't know whether (1-2G) or not. They were undulator tapes. Then I spent 2 and a half years or so working in the 1st (1G) outfit, in the collection role, doing (1G) for...

**Williams**

Go ahead, go ahead. That's all right, go ahead.

**Pryde**

OK. After that, I went to the, I guess it was (1G), where I worked closer to staff folks and an O4 on the APC's guided missile (1-2G) committee member and at the same time I was the Agency's member of the scientific intelligence committee, communications sub-committee. From there I went to a job in the pentagon working for (1G), as the Chief of defense, ASDI, I'm not sure what they call him these days. I came back to the job as the Deputy Chief of the (2-3G) division, moved up to the Chief of, (B% mathematic) division, division over in uh, the space program for "O4". From there I went to a job in uh, another job downtown to be the Deputy (TR Note: Corrects) be the Director's aid in the pentagon. Came back with the Director of DEFSMAC, and after that the Chief, Deputy Chief of "M", which was, at that time, Personnel Security etc.... I called them the "cats and dogs" of the Agency.

**Williams**

Mr. Pryde, can we go back to the "213".

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

Now, that's very interesting. Did you know a Bill Jones? He... there was an oral interview...

**Pryde**

Yes, I knew Bill.

**Williams**

OK, Bill Jones was in "213" as well.

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

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**UNCLASSIFIED**

Now was that, ASA, ASA "213" or...

**Pryde**

No it was AFSA 213.

**Williams**

AFSA 213. OK. And who was the, do you remember who was the Chief of that organization?

**Pryde**

(XB).

**Williams**

Was he white or black?

**Pryde**

White. The Deputy Chief was Jenkins Johnson.

**Williams**

Right. OK, and was he...I didn't know him, was he white or black?

**Pryde**

No, he was black.

**Williams**

OK. Is he deceased.

**Dickerson**

Uh-uh (TR Note: Speaker replies negatively).

**Williams**

And that's where most of the black people came?

**Pryde**

They either worked there or in the basement in the... it was where the... (1-2G) came in the computer, punching.

**Williams**

Key Punch?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

OK. All right. How large was "213"?

**Pryde**

"213" was about uh... I think about 150 people.

**Williams**

OK. Do you remember any of the other names that were in "213" with you?

**Pryde**

Lets see... Iris Carr.

**Williams**

Dave Bryant

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**Pryde**

Dave Bryant, yes.

**Williams**

Where was Bill Coffee at this time? Was he in there?

**Pryde**

I don't remember Bill being there. I'm not sure Bill was in the building that early.

**Williams**

OK, all right. Was there... Go ahead, you were going to say something.

**Dickerson**

What about Norm Willis?

**Pryde**

Noam Willis.

**Dickerson**

Noam Wilis?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

Was he there?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

OK. Dorothea Smith?

**Pryde**

Dorothea Smith was there, yes.

**Williams**

OK.

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**Pryde**

But Dorothea died several years ago.

**Williams**

That's what I understand. She was a beautiful woman.

**Pryde**

Yes. was there and she has also recently died.

**Williams**

(XG/Speaker mumbles). OK. What did the "213" do?

**Pryde**

"213" would take tapes from [redacted] Russian (1G) channels and identified certain communications, which eventually turned out to be the [redacted]

**Williams**

Oh, OK.

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**Pryde**

And (2G), but that's all they got to do. They couldn't analyze the traffic, all we could do was look at the addresses and determine whether or not it was a tape that should go some place else.

**Williams**

OK, OK. So did they, where they able to pick out key words to help...

**Pryde**

No. They had an address.

**Williams**

Address.

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

OK. Do you know any... Was Jack Gurin part of this group or did he...

**Pryde**

Say again please.

**Williams**

Jack, J-A-C-K, Gurin G-U-R-I-N (TR Note: Speaker spells the name).

**Pryde**

No, Jack was a part of the group who got the tapes. He was not in "213".

**Williams**

OK, so 213 wasn't part of his organization.

**Pryde**

No.

**Williams**

OK. Is that the first place that you know of that, where blacks where assigned? Is that your earliest memory or understanding?

**Pryde**

No. In the building?

**Williams**

Yes.

**Pryde**

No, I can't go back any further in the building, but during World War II, I signed up to be a Tuskegee Airman, all black.

**Williams**

Right.

**Pryde**

A few names , General... I'll think of his name in a minute. His first uh...He was the first Air Force Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Colonel, and General and at that time, as I told

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you earlier, it was not just the spirit of the land, it was the law of the land, that "Colored Folks" would be separate.

**Williams**

Right. So, when you were a Tuskegee Airman did you have any connection with intelligence at all?

**Pryde**

No, no. We just went off to fight the war.

**Williams**

OK. So "213" is your earliest recollection of "Black Folks" connected to what was, what became NSA?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

OK.

**Pryde**

"213" was actually the place where I worked when I entered the Agency itself. During the time that I was waiting to be cleared I worked at the Naval Security Station, and it was also "black" by the way.

**Williams**

What'd you do there?

**Pryde**

I separated code books.

**Williams**

OK. How did you get... I know from my memory of you, you were heavily involved in telemetry and... How did you acquire those skills? How did you go into that technical arena?

**Pryde**

Well, I had good communications information when I got there. I'd been trained as a radio operator during World War II so I knew electronics.

**Williams**

I see.

**Pryde**

I went from there to the scientific intelligence sub-committee on electronics and from there I just have... I learned the telemetry business. Telemetry is fairly simple. You see a lot of it around now in hospitals. All they are really doing is taking data at one point and communicating it someplace else.

**Williams**

Mr. Pryde, when you were in the "213" or, what did you call it "213"?

**Pryde**

"213", yes.

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**Williams**

When you were in "213", was there any... Did managers come to you and tell yo how you could get out of that group or advance or... How did you get out of "213"?

**Pryde**

There were advancements within "213", but at that time there were no advancements out of "213". I was there a year when they came to ask me if I could still remember morse code and that's how I got out eventually, into my own room. (TR Note: Laughter)... In "211".

**Williams**

In "211".

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

Now, you said there were separate hours to eat lunch?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Dickerson**

Tell us about those conditions

**Pryde**

Oh the conditions weren't all that bad because at that time we were fairly used to being separated, but now I think it's terrible, but at that time it wasn't bad...

**Dickerson**

That was normal.

**Pryde**

Yes. It was expected, I wouldn't say it's normal.

**Williams**

Where there clubs or... The Agency has lots of clubs and activities now?

**Pryde**

We didn't have any in those days.

**Williams**

Didn't have any?

**Pryde**

No.

**Williams**

Not for whites or blacks?

**Pryde**

I can't say that for sure but there was nothing pub... there were no public clubs in the Agency.

**Williams**

OK. Did we have a News letter or anything like that?

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**Pryde**

No.

**Williams**

OK. Now when you were interviewed to come into the Agency, was... Where you interviewed?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

And that was in Washington or?

**Pryde**

No, I was interviewed at Arlington Hall Station.

**Williams**

At Arlington Hall Station.

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

And were you polygraphed?

**Pryde**

No.

**Williams**

No. That was before polygraphs.

**Pryde**

Well not quite. My first polygraph was in 1984 or (1985.

**Williams**

No!

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

You weren't polygraphed?

**Pryde**

I was not polygraphed.

**Williams**

Why was that?

**Pryde**

I really just think they didn't bother to polygraph poor black folk.

**Williams**

Would you say the whites were polygraphed when they came in? Did you know?

**Pryde**

Yes.

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**Williams**

Uh-huh. We interviewed Ray Weir yesterday.

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

Do you know Ray?

**Pryde**

Yes I know Ray. I'm pleased to hear he's still with us.

**Williams**

Yes and very sharp, very interesting interview. But, he said he was the first black polygrapher, not only at NSA but in the world.

**Pryde**

That's probably true.

**Williams**

And it may be that Ray wasn't onboard when you came onboard. I don't know.

**Pryde**

(3-4G) before me.

**Williams**

Yes sir. OK. You were very interested in this project Mr. Pryde. Tell us in your words why you think, uh, what's spurring your interest.

**Pryde**

OK. My interest is two-fold; One, to get some recognition for the black, African American Folk who decided that they never wanted anything to do with the Agency because they would think they've had a bad time there, and secondly, to let, just let everybody know that the African American people do do useful things in the building and things that probably couldn't have been done without them. So I want to help to (1G) raise the (1G) for the African Americans to come back to the building or come back to the social activities of the museum. Whenever I worked at (TR Note: Stutters) the other (1G) recognize that there was major African American participation in the growth of the Agency.

**Williams**

You've talked about, they were, people in "213" were scanning tapes which later turned out to be [redacted] information.

**Pryde**

Yes.

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**Williams**

So they initially identified these...

**Pryde**

No I think they would issue a list of addresses.

**Williams**

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OK.

**Pryde**

Most of the people in "213" went to [redacted] organizations when they broke it up.

**Williams**

OK. You talk about contributions of black folk. Can you, at least in some general terms, not getting too classified, talk about some of them that you know of that you think were significant, that should be highlighted and should be remembered?

**Pryde**

Lets see, I'm having a hard time with names today.

**Williams**

I have a hard times with names every day.

**Pryde**

Lets see, one of the people that I would say to you, Oscar Collins, that's the name I'm trying to remember. Oscar did a lot of good work in "A" group and then went on to, into GVA, or whatever it's called today.

**Williams**

GVA at that time right. OK. He's someone we should talk to.

**Pryde**

Iris Carr did some very good work in keeping morale up in "213".

**Williams**

Is that right?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

Morale was not good sir?

**Pryde**

Morale was not good.

**Williams**

Is that because of the segregated conditions or the work was boring, or...

**Pryde**

The work was boring and everybody was segregated. Segregation didn't end until the... Truman had said there should be no more segregation in the military.

**Williams**

Uh-huh. And people went into "213", it didn't matter what your educational level was or experience or whatever. If you were brown, that's where you went.

**Pryde**

That's right. That's correct. That's where you went.

**Williams**

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What about training? Was there training or, other than giving you a list of addresses, you know to (2-3B by next speaker).

**Pryde**

I wouldn't consider that training. There was no actual training.

**Williams**

Right. There was no training.

**Pryde**

No. For training, you had to have some hope of going some place else. At that time, "213" was about the only place you could go unless you were to go down to the basement to the "key punch".

**Williams**

So, when "213" was broken up, because these people had recognized the addresses belonging to [redacted] that's where they just migrated to.

**Pryde**

No, that's where they were sent because they knew (2-3G) they knew some of the material that they'd been working on all of this time.

**Williams**

OK.

**Dickerson**

Mr. Pryde, did anyone initiate any training on their own? Did they... Anyone decide to go to training at the recommendation of the Agency, because they wanted to?

**Pryde**

I'm sure that people went for more education, not sponsored by the Agency staff I know. I don't know what the Agency's record was in those days of sponsoring education for people in "213".

**Williams**

You talked about the public transportation being segregated, the cafeteria segregating eating hours. Was there a Med Center? Do you remember a medical facility?

**Pryde**

I don't remember one.

**Williams**

OK. There was overt discrimination.

**Pryde**

Yes, and it was legal.

**Williams**

And it was legal.

**Pryde**

That's an important point to remember.

**Williams**

Did the personnel, did you have personnel bulletins and was there ever anything that

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overtly said, you know, whites or blacks or, in personnel.

**Pryde**

It might have, but uh, some boards were "white only", some boards were "Colored".

**Williams**

Is that right?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

(1G) boards or...

**Pryde**

(1G) boards, yes.

**Williams**

Is that right? At Arlington Hall.

**Pryde**

At Arlington Hall Station, yes.

**Williams**

Were there any whites in "213"?

**Pryde**

One. The Army Major who was the boss of "213". Jim Krome was his name.

**Williams**

We got a name!

**Dickerson**

Uh-huh.

**Williams**

Do you know if he's still around, sir?

**Pryde**

I don't think so, 'cause he was an older fellow when I first got to "213".

**Williams**

OK. Those are most of the questions that we have here, sir. How are we doing on tape?

**Dickerson**

What I wanted to ask Mr. Pryde, when did people at Arlington Hall moved to the Agency, where it is today; what was the mode of transportation. I know that many of them did not have transportation, travelling back and forth from Fort Meade to D.C.

**Pryde:** Lets see, I think there used to be a bus from D.C., from Arlington Hall to Fort Meade.

**Williams**

Yep, I took that bus. Mr. Pryde, did you ever hear the term "Black Friday"? There is a

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story going around that, and I don't know if it was "213", it doesn't sound like it was "213". There's a story going around that there was a group of black folk that were assigned to read Russian plain-text traffic.

**Pryde**

Yep.

**Dickerson**

And they gave that traffic to black folk because the feeling was that if it was important, they would encrypt it, right, so there wasn't important (2-3B by next speaker)

**Pryde**

Uh-Huh.

**Williams**

And then, the Russians changed their cipher system and the only thing that was being read was the plain-text and that's what the black people were assigned and the Agency was in a quandary; "What'll we do?" and that was called "Black Friday". Do you know anything about this?

**Pryde**

I remember the (1G), but I've never heard the term "Black Friday".

**Williams**

OK.

**Pryde**

But then I wouldn't have been in the position to hear it anyway.

**Williams:** Right.

**Pryde**

And nobody's gonna admit to it.

**Dickerson**

Uh-huh. OK. What about black people working at the Armory back in the early 50's and 40's and the term being used as the General's Boy.

**Pryde**

At the Armory?

**Williams**

Uh-huh, the Washington D.C. Armory.

**Pryde**

I never knew of that one. The training schools were Annex "S" down on main street). I didn't know they had any people at the D.C. Armory, ever.

**Dickerson**

OK.

**Pryde**

Do you have any idea who might have been in that group?

**Dickerson**

I don't know her name but [redacted] mother worked at the Agency during that time.

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She's deceased now, but she would have been around 80, 85.

**Pryde**

Uh-huh.

**Dickerson**

And she said that's where her mother initially worked.

**Williams**

Was Clem Acquiillea in your group, "213", too?

**Pryde**

No, Clem Acquilla) (2-3G) (TR Note: End of cut).

**Williams**

OK. 'cause she said she was hired in '51 and she spent... maybe '52, she spent a little bit of time at Arlington Hall and then she moved out with the Agency.

**Dickerson**

Who was your... Who was the Director at the time?

**Pryde**

(1G) somebody.

**Williams**

You don't remember.

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

Ok. Anything else you want to tell us, Mr. Pryde? Off the top of your head, talk about?

**Pryde**

I guess I can understand that it discontented some of the black folk, but I had a ball during my adult years.

**Williams**

I know you did, and you were well rewarded.

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

You had a very successful career.

**Pryde**

And I'm still (1G) at the Agency. I'm on the museum board.

**Williams**

Good for you!

**Pryde**

Have you been to the museum?

**Williams**

I have, several times.

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**Pryde**

Thank you! (2-3G).

**Williams**

OK, I will. This is the 5th anniversary of the museum. But I have often... I'll go to the museum or I'll see the exhibits in the lobby as you come into the building...

**Pryde**

Uh-huh.

**Williams**

And there's no evidence of black folk's involvement in the Agency.

**Pryde**

That's why I'm giving this interview today.

**Williams**

That's right, that's right and before I took this assignment, I've wondered about that and so I'm learning a lot. It's really interesting.

**Pryde**

The Agency had the same problems that the whole nation had, at the same times. Until the president said there shall be no further discrimination in the military, the Agency discriminated...

**Williams**

Mr. Pryde, when it moved out to... I remember when I came out to Maryland in 1964, it was still more like a southern town. The Laurel area was more like a southern town.

**Pryde**

Yep.

**Williams**

And, so, you didn't think about moving to a location near the Agency, did you?

**Pryde**

No I didn't but during that time I lived with two other guys, both white. Walter Marshall and Hank DeCourt. There was one time that a series of beatings went on, (2G) and other places would actually just turn me away. They were put on the list of "no soldiers", which meant that they'd make no money until they changed.

**Williams**

Oh, is that right?

**Pryde**

Yes. One of the things that the military could do was (2-3G) just by saying, define them as "off limits" to our soldiers. That happened when I went to (1G). I went to a hotel there and they wouldn't serve me and it was put "off limits". And "off limits" means more than just telling people they can't come, it means that periodically, an MP would stroll through just to see who was there. And that took care of a lot of problems of integration.

**Williams**

So Mr. Pryde, when you moved out to Fort Meade, when you moved out to Fort Meade,

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and you did this with Hank De Court and the other gentleman.

**Pryde**

Walter Marshall.

**Williams**

Walter Marshall. You were a civilian...

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

And you went with them and they, some of these places turned you away...

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

And you put this...

**Pryde**

I told the base places that wouldn't serve me.

**Williams**

To the Fort Meade people?

**Pryde**

No. To the, I've forgotten the place, it was in NSA, however.

**Williams**

Oh it was NSA?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

Is that right?

**Pryde**

Yes. And then they turned it over the military to enforce.

**Williams**

What year was that, sir?

**Pryde**

19... I was in the first bunch of people who went to the new building.

**Williams**

So it was probably '54, '55?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Dickerson**

'55, uh-huh.

**Dickerson**

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Do you remember any of the places?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

(2-3G)?

**Pryde**

No. The "Stage Coach", I think it was the "Stage Coach Bar", right below...

**Williams**

Now in existence.

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

What about "Hinckle's"?

**Pryde**

"Hinckle's" I never got down to. In fact, "Hinckle's" didn't start out about until uh, about five years after I'd been there.

**Williams**

OK. Isn't that interesting? So, these places, did they find out that they were on this list?

**Pryde**

Oh, they had a big sign on the window that says "OFF LIMITS".

**Williams**

Is that right. So, that changed the policies for some?

**Pryde**

That changed the policies going down "198".

**Dickerson**

Mr. Pryde, after the de-segregation of the military, and you moved out to the Agency, how was recruiting done, as far as college level black civilians? Or were there?

**Pryde**

There was uh... (2G) one person on "M" staff who went to the predominantly minority schools to try and hire people. When they got to the point where there were lots of minority graduates, they had a choice of coming to NSA for some money, or going to NSA's contractors for a lot of money and they went for a lot of money, for the most part. But (B% a huge) part in getting minorities into NSA was that you had a state-wide (2-3G) when something like that comes out. We went through one period where "M5" wouldn't allow anybody who'd had used even soft drugs before the age of 15 to come in. We got that changed but we had to go to it being that if you had used soft drugs before the age of 18 you were, they were permitted to allow you to stay in the funnel but you had to be willing to take a lie detector test whenever they ask for it.

**Williams**

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Are there any other name you think we should... people that we should interview, you know you talked about Oscar Collins...

**Pryde**

No, but if I can think of any, can I call you?

**Williams**

Oh yes. Do you have our numbers Yolande?

**Dickerson**

No, I'm sorry.

**Williams**

We'll write it down for you.

**Pryde**

OK.

**Williams**

Our number. We should have business cards.

**Dickerson**

Yes, we should have.

**Williams**

I do have business cards, I just never carry them.

**Pryde**

Shame on you.

**Williams**

I know, I know. OK. Mr. Pryde, if yo can think of any significant work that blacks did during the time of the 40's-55 that you think that we should know about, could you let us know? Anything of significance, that you can tell us.

**Pryde**

You are black. I can tell you anything.

**Williams**

That's right, that's right. But if you think of anything... And it would also be helpful, Mr. Pryde, if you would, as your talking to people, encourage them to call us, get in touch with us.

**Pryde**

I will be very happy to do that, although I will tell you that I have been unsuccessful at getting people to take advantage of the Phoenix Society. It's being paid for, you may as well enjoy some of the things they do.

**Williams**

Oh, I talked to [redacted] this morning.

**Pryde**

Yes, how is [redacted]

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**Williams**

And [redacted] said "please", oh she's great. She said "please give my best to Mr. Pryde and she's really active in the Phoenix Society.

**Pryde**

I hired [redacted]

**Williams**

Did you really?

**Pryde**

Yes.

**Williams**

She's a dear friend of mine.

**Pryde**

[redacted] must still be in Ski season, I haven't seen a lot of her.

**Williams**

She's just back... She came back Sunday from the mountain.

**Pryde**

OK.

**Williams**

She came back Sunday. She's going home [redacted] for the holidays and she's taking Jan... She'll be home in the Washington area for January and then February till about early April skiing. She's had a good life.

**Pryde**

Yep. Most of us have had a good life.

**Williams**

Yes, yes, yes. Yolande and I were just talking about this. I feel very fortunate, we feel very fortunate for what we've been able to do.

**Pryde**

Uh-huh.

**Williams**

We really do. OK. We want to...

**Pryde**

Even if some of us were not very happy, we got more than we would have gotten any place else.

**Williams**

You're absolutely right. OK. I did all that talking and.... (TR Note: Cut ends here).

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